

**MEETING MINUTES  
BERKLEY DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 8:15 AM  
Berkley Public Safety, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Conference Room**



- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 8:16 AM with Executive Director Michael McGuinness presiding.
  
- II. **ROLL CALL:**
  - A. **Attendance Taken and Quorum Determined**

*Present:* Matthew Baumgarten  
Donna Dirkse  
Desiree Dutcher  
Katie Forte  
Chris Gross  
Uli Laczkovich  
Matteo Passalacqua  
Ashley Poirier  
Talia Wittenberg  
Brian Zifkin

*Absent:* Tim Barnes – *excused*  
Justin Findling – *excused*  
Scott Francis – *excused*  
Andy Gilbert – *excused*

*Also present:* Steve Baker, City Council Liaison  
Kristen Kapelanski, Community Development Director  
Mike McGuinness, DDA Executive Director  
Tim Murad, Chamber of Commerce Liaison  
Ric Chalmers, Berkley DPW
  
- III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

On motion by Dirkse and second by Poirier, the agenda was unanimously approved by the Board.
  
- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting of November 8, 2023**  
On motion by Gross and second by Forte, the minutes of the regular meeting of November 8, 2023 were unanimously approved by the Board.
  
- V. **TREASURER'S REPORT:**
  - A. **Financial Report for October, 2023**

Gross reported revenues for October, 2023 were @\$245,000, expenses @\$19,000 (mostly skeletons, events, flower baskets, regular salaries), and total revenues to date of @\$381,000, expenditures @\$84,000, leaving a net for the year of @\$296,000. The yearly audit had not been completed, and the City is bringing in a new Finance Director, so there are still some questions to be answered.

Poirier moved to receive and approve the Financial Reports for October 2023, Dirkse seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

**VI. ACTION ITEMS:**

There were no scheduled action items for this meeting.

**VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**A. Holiday Shopping Season Promotional Initiatives Underway**

(Holiday Lights, Elf on a Store Shelf, Parade, Gazebo, Shopping Nights, Trolley, Santa)  
McGuinness reported that working with the holiday lighting contractor, and at the request of Board members, color was added to this year's display, and snowflake light panels were put up around the gazebo at City Hall. Inspection revealed some lights not working, and DTE has been advised. The light poles in the district are not of consistent size (height) and style.

Some downtown businesses are installing (hiding) an elf on a shelf or a mensch on a bench. The Holiday Lights Parade enjoyed good weather and participation. The DDA increased its support from \$500 to \$1,000. Three Merry and Bright Shopping Nights are scheduled for Thursdays before Christmas. The Jolly Trolley ran 10:00 to 5:00 the previous Saturday and was crowded, with Elf McGuinness riding along all day.

Santa at the Library was visited by 309 children. It was suggested that in the future it would be good to track the number of trolley riders (easy to do with a clicker). It was also suggested to GPS track the trolley to know where it is at any given time. Santa at the Library could be changed to Saturday instead of Sunday to coincide with the Jolly Trolley rides. The Artsy Umbrella also had a Santa.

**B. Status of Recent Grant Decisions, Latest Request for 2965 W. 12 Mile Facade**

McGuinness reported that the building owner of Reware Vintage on 12 Mile will be applying for a façade grant to facilitate changes to their second story windows so that they match the lower ground floor ones. Rachel Pinch's façade renovations are progressing. The 12 Mile America's Stamp Stop is applying for a façade grant for their 2<sup>nd</sup> floor addition and may also apply for a mural grant in the future.

**C. Downtown Landscaping Needs and Opportunities**

The Downtown landscaping needs and opportunities were reviewed, including that the empty tree wells will get replacement trees in spring next year. Passalacqua suggested that the landscaping contract, which will be coming up for renewal soon, be negotiated to cover multiple years. Passalacqua suggested both north and south Robina needs landscaping attention, starting with low hanging fruit to make the spaces uniform. Forte suggested a committee could work on proposed landscaping strategies and improvements. Chalmers noted the DPW works well with the contractor.

**VIII. LIAISON REPORTS**

**A. City Council – Steve Baker**

Baker reported their 11/30 joint work session with the Planning Commission involved zoning ordinance revisions, and public hearings will be scheduled soon. Council's last meeting included the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of the proposed pet store ordinance; upcoming issues are repairing the community center roof and service fees for trash collection.

**B. Community Development – Kristen Kapelanski**

Kapelanski reported they have scheduled public engagement sessions about zoning ordinance revisions at the high school Collaborative Center on January 8, 17, 24, and 31. They have been meeting with the parking committee regarding the implementation and some of their recommendations. Parklet ordinance details will have their second reading at City Council.

**C. Planning Commission – Lisa Kempner**

Absent, Kapelanski reported the Commission did not meet. The agreement for the Coolidge proposed PUD is being reviewed by attorneys for the developer and the City.

**D. Public Works – Ric Chalmers**

Nothing additional to report.

**E. Chamber of Commerce – Tim Murad**

Murad reported planning is underway for 2024, including Chamber Chats. They will be bringing back evening blenders. The holiday party at Republica was well attended. They have several new Board members bringing a lot of energy to the Chamber. The Chamber donated a painting to the city that now resides at City Hall.

**IX. Closed Session**

**A. Move to Go into Closed Session to discuss Executive Director Annual Performance Review**  
At 9:02 AM, Zifkin moved to go into closed session, Passalacqua seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously by the Board.

Baumgarten moved to adjourn the closed session and reopen the regular meeting at 9:21 AM.

**B. Provide Update on Concluded Annual Performance Review, as Needed**

Passalacqua summarized next steps, after noting the review had been discussed and would be forwarded to Board members. He advised McGuinness that Board members were grateful for everything he had done and supported his work 100%. Passalacqua said he had been the most effective director in his memory.

Next, the Hiring Committee will meet with McGuinness to go over specific points in the review that they felt would make his job more structured and efficient, and then come back to the Board with their recommendations. McGuinness thanked him and the Board for the review and the opportunity to assess where they are and where they can go as well as the opportunity to work for this dynamic organization.

**X. STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES**

Wittenberg reported students are completing final assignments. McGuinness noted spring food trucks and weekly BOOKley food trucks in October are the target and will be coordinated further with the School District.

**XI. BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

**A. Art & Design Committee – Matteo Passalacqua**

Passalacqua reported that, effectively, there is no official subcommittee any more.

McGuinness noted that volunteer engagement is an essential component of Main Street, so that's something that needs attention.

**B. Business Development Committee**

No report.

**C. Downtown Events Committee**

No additional report.

**D. Marketing Strategies Committee – Ashley Poirier**

No additional report.

**E. Organization Committee – Scott Francis**

No report.

**F. West 12-Mile Committee – Brian Zifkin**

Zifkin reported bears are still in place, and he's been investigating lanterns.

**XII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES**

**A.** McGuinness reported that all the RAP 2.0 placemaking applications were denied, and the next step would be for communities to apply individually to Oakland County for 40%/60% match grants using American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds. Applications are due March 2024, and the Berkley DDA will try to identify an affordable project or improvements they could do with those 60% funds. There is \$5 million total available in grant funding.

**B.** Main Street Annual Re-Accreditation will take place in January.

**C.** Larry Gallagher retired from the School District the week prior, and McGuinness sent a tribute on behalf the DDA, where Gallagher served for many years.

**XIII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' COMMENTS:**

Zifkin asked if the crosswalk work was completed, and McGuinness noted everything is done but the striping. Dutcher noted that cars are actually stopping for pedestrians when signaled.

Gross reported that Bombshell is looking for an off-site storage space of @800 feet and don't need refrigeration.

Forte reported the city's Beautification Committee is holding "Lighting Up Berkley" on December 21 encouraging residents to light up the neighborhoods with luminaries, and she suggested downtown businesses join in.

Poirier reported she would be unavailable during January as her family welcomes a new baby.

**XIV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:** The opportunity for public comment was offered, and no requests to comment were made at the meeting. Anyone with comments or questions is asked to e-mail them to the DDA to be answered within five business days.

**XV. Adjournment:**

The regular meeting was adjourned at 9:42 AM on motion by Passalacqua and second by Forte.

**XVI. Informational Meeting to Follow**